

**Testimony for House Committee on Business and Labor**

Regarding HB 2684

Testimony of Christina Cowgill, CRNA

ONLC Chair 2015

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Dear Chair Holvey and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Nursing Leadership Collaborative (ONLC), I write today to ask for your support of HB 2684 to make permanent provisions allowing retired nurses to be employed full-time by public employer as nursing instructor without loss of retirement benefits.

In 1999, ONLC was formed when nursing leaders in the state became concerned over the looming shortage of nurses. Members of the ONLC include representatives from the following groups: Oregon Nurses Association, Northwest Organization of Nurse Executives, Oregon State Board of Nursing, Oregon Association of Associate Degree Programs and Deans of Schools of Nursing.

In 2007, the Oregon legislature passed Senate Bill 4. This bill addressed three key topics:

- (1) declared a nursing workforce and a nursing faculty workforce shortage,
- (2) allowed individuals employed as nurses or nursing educators who work on a less than half-time basis to be eligible for health insurance through the Public Employees' Benefit Board (amendment to ORS 243.105), and
- (3) allowed retired individuals to work as a registered nurse and those who are employed by a public employer as a nursing instructor without jeopardizing their participation in the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS).

These amendments included in SB 4 have been a huge retention "tool" for experienced nurses and nurse faculty that worked for the state. This includes nurses who work at OHSU hospital and clinics, and at the state hospital. This also includes nurse faculty at the six OHSU campuses.

The nursing shortage declared in 2007 is still in effect today. In fact the latest HRSA projections (2014) state that Oregon will have a shortage of between 6,000 and 7,000 registered nurses, which is consistent with projections made by the Oregon Center for Nursing.

Currently, these amendments from SB 4 are scheduled to expire on January 2, 2016. House Bill 2684 will remove this sunset and allow nurses and nurse faculty who work for public entities to continue to work, alleviating these workforce shortages and keeping experienced nurses in the workforce.